 aftr mao file

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27 May 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Special Assistant to the DCI
Deputy to the DCI for National Intelligence, Designate
Deputy Director for Intelligence
Associate Deputy Director for Operations
National Intelligence Officer for China
Director of Political Research (DDI)

FROM : William K. Parmenter
Director of Current Intelligence (DDI)

SUBJECT : What We Would Write If Mao Dies

1. The attached is a "model" or "sample" of the kind of paper we would consider producing promptly after Mao's death. Obviously the substantive content of the actual paper will be different; [redacted] wrote this one "as if" Mao just died. 25X1

2. [redacted] has argued strongly that the paper be "coordinated"; this is attractive conceptually, but I wonder how we would do it under time pressure with a paper of this kind. Perhaps we need community agreement in advance that we will not go beyond the bare facts in a "national" format until an interagency memorandum can be produced, with the NIO making sure that differing views had received full expression. 25X1

3. I am disappointed that it is not possible to produce in advance a piece of boiler-plate describing the likely mechanics of the demise-and-succession. [redacted] tells me, however, that Mao's death would be such an unprecedented event, in the political sense, that even the most elementary aspects of the arrangements cannot be usefully forecast. 25X1

[redacted] 25X1

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SUBJECT: What We Would Write If Mao Dies

4. We solicit your views on the nature of the paper that should be produced, especially whether you think this "model" is an appropriate one. We also would like to have thoughts and/or instructions on the coordination question, as well as any other suggestions you may wish to make.

[redacted] 25X1

William K. Parmenter

Attachment:
a paper titled: AFTER MAO,
dated 26 May 1976

Distribution:
Orig - SA/DCI w/att
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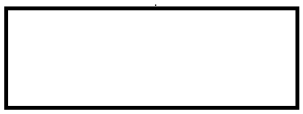
26 May 1976

AFTER MAO

The death of Mao Tse-tung, announced _____, will not come as a traumatic surprise to the Chinese populace; the regime has been preparing the public for this event for some time through wide dissemination of photographs showing an increasingly aged and infirm Chairman. The political repercussion of his demise, however, may well last for years.

Mao had been an important member of the Chinese Communist Party since its founding in 1921, and Chairman since the mid-1930s. He has been the most important man in China since the Communists took power in 1949 and the central reference point in the often confused politics of the party for much longer. Even when his will was partly thwarted by others in the Chinese leadership whose policy views differed from his own, his personality and programs could never be ignored; even his opponents claimed to be speaking in his name and to be carrying out his commands. As the dominating force in Chinese politics, a founder of the party, the formulator of the "Chinese way" to communism and the man who led the Chinese revolution to triumph, Mao will be irreplacable. There is no one on the Chinese scene today who even remotely commands the authority that has been accorded to him or who can easily assume the charismatic role of leader of the Chinese people he exercised for years.

In the upper echelons of the party, however, the Chairman's death may come as something of a relief to a considerable number of second-level leaders. Mao's autocratic actions, suspiciousness and sometimes



25X1

erratic policy shifts were almost certainly resented by some of his associates and subordinates, particularly in the past decade. Some of these individuals are now likely to believe that more orderly and rational approaches to policy problems can be taken without fear of reprisals from the Chairman.

Although Mao's place in the three-thousand-year-old history of the Chinese state is likely to loom large, one conspicuous failure in his long domination of the political scene is already glaringly evident and is likely to have serious implications for the future. The Chairman did not succeed in providing for a widely acknowledged and recognized successor. Two designated successors, Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao, fell by the wayside in 1966 and 1971 respectively. A third, Teng Hsiao-ping, who appeared in a position to inherit much of Mao's authority if not the formal title of party chairman, was removed from all his high positions in early April. At the same time, the young Wang Hung-wen, who by virtue of his position in the hierarchy seemed to have a shot at succession to the formal title of party chairman--but probably without much of the authority that normally could accrue to that post--was demoted. Finally, Chou En-lai, who by virtue of his experience and the respect accorded him by most Chinese was perhaps the most logical of all possible successors to Mao, died last January.

For several years the Chinese have talked about post-Mao arrangements in terms of a collegial group which would in effect share the Chairman's authority among themselves. Such an arrangement is entirely possible, at least in the short run, since it seems clear that no single individual has the stature to replace Mao in his full leadership capacity. It is possible, in fact, that the post of party chairman may now be retired, as a post that could only be held by the irreplacable leader who has just died. The Nationalist Chinese on Taiwan followed a similar procedure at the death of Chiang Kai-shek last year. In this case, Peking would probably revive the post of party secretary-general, which has been dormant since the start of the Cultural Revolution, in order to provide a manager for party affairs.

If the post of Chairman is to be filled, however, the most likely candidate for the job is Premier Hua Kuo-feng, who is now "first" party vice chairman, a new post created in early April, at the time of the fall of Teng Hsiao-ping. Hua is, however, a compromise figure who lacks a strong power base and who has operated at the center of power for only a few years. In his hands the post of chairman would be less important than it was when Mao occupied the position. Moreover, there are almost certainly a number of senior leaders of the party who would prefer that additional power and prestige did not accrue to Hua. There have been occasional covert attacks on Hua in the media since January, and his deputy in Hunan Province, which he ran before coming to Peking, has been under heavy political pressure for several months. It is possible, therefore, that Hua's elevation to the chairmanship could be contested, and in fact any decision to fill the post might be put off for some time. It is also possible that if Hua were elevated to the chairmanship, he could be balanced off by a reconstitution of the post of secretary-general. In this case a leading candidate for that job would be the leftist political boss of Shanghai, Chang Chun-chiao, who probably performs the functions of secretary-general on a de facto basis at present. There is certain to be opposition to this appointment from the party's right wing, however.

If the post of chairman were abolished, that of the current party vice chairmen would also have to be abolished. In addition to Hua, the other vice chairmen are Wang Hung-wen, whose youth makes him suspect to many older party members and whose alignment with the left wing of the party is a major disability in the eyes of the rightists, and Defense Minister Yeh Chien-ying, a long-time associate of the late Chou En-lai who has been identified with the party's right wing and who came under criticism earlier this year for his vehement support of Teng Hsiao-ping. The balance these two men provide could be an argument for preserving the system of chairman and vice chairmen. If, however, that system is scrapped, Hua Kuo-feng would be an obvious candidate for the secretary-general's post. Since Chang Chun-chiao also has claims on this job, a clash between the two could easily develop.

Insofar as the principle of collegiality is followed by the Chinese, the three current vice chairmen, Chang Chun-chiao and Peking Military Region Commander Chen Hsi-lien would almost certainly form the core of the collective. These five men are the most powerful in China today. They are not likely to work easily together, however. The left-right split between Yeh, on the one hand, and Wang and Chang, on the other, is already pronounced, and as already noted, there is potential for serious friction between Chang and Hua. Chen, even more than Yeh, the defense minister, is likely to represent military interests in the collective. Many important military figures have resented the leftist leaders since the days of the Cultural Revolution, and to the degree that Chen speaks for them, he could come into conflict with Chang and Wang. Chen, however, appears to be an ambitious man whose personal interests could lead him into temporary and expedient alliances with any civilian faction. He is reported to have abandoned Teng Hsiao-ping at a crucial juncture last January, for example, and this move may have been an important factor in Teng's subsequent political demise.

Latent factionalism among the ruling group is likely to come to the fore rather quickly, in fact. Mao's death occurs at a tense and rather fluid moment in Chinese politics. Repercussions from the Teng purge are still echoing throughout the country--in the provinces and in Peking. The fissure between the party's right and left wings is perhaps wider than at any time since the late stages of the Cultural Revolution, and the issue of relations between the military and civilian members of the party is still not fully resolved. Since the attacks on Teng began, the army has begun to reemerge as an important factor in political affairs; this tendency is likely to become more pronounced in the wake of Mao's death.

This confused situation makes a struggle among the various factions in the leadership all but inevitable, and this struggle is likely to make itself manifest sooner rather than later. Mao has died at an unpropitious moment for the party's left wing, however. This group--a minority in the party and among the leadership--has not yet managed to achieve a solid and largely unassailable position, as it clearly hoped to do before the Chairman's

death. Mao had his differences with the leftists in recent years, but they were at most times able to play on his obsessive concern for the development of an equalitarian China, and their enemies were inhibited by fear that Mao could intervene on their behalf in unexpected fashion. This inhibition has now been removed.

One likely victim of these changed circumstances is Mao's wife, the termagant Chiang Ching. She is widely disliked, and without the Chairman's potential protection she may well fall by the wayside rather quickly. The left as a whole is in fact now in a somewhat unenviable position. It is likely to be on the defense in whatever struggle develops in the wake of Mao's death. Nevertheless, leftist leaders, although a minority, speak for a significant portion of the Chinese party, and the struggle, if it develops, is not likely to be resolved quickly.

This fact, plus the obvious difficulty the Chinese will have in adjusting to a China without Mao, is likely to inhibit the development of new policy initiatives and to slow the implementation of policies already adopted, both in the domestic and foreign policy spheres. If the military gains an increased voice in policy-making, however, it is possible that Peking may become more receptive to the idea of moderating somewhat its unyielding opposition to the USSR.